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UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 003979

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR AND PM; SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL DR

SUBJECT: ARTICLE 98 RATIFICATION PROGRESS IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

REF: STATE 145167

¶1. The Dominican Senate gave its approval to ratification of the Article 98 bilateral agreement on June 15 and forwarded the proposal to the lower house of Congress (Chamber of Deputies) for action. The same day, the DCM urged Chamber Speaker Alfredo Pacheco (PRD) to ensure prompt approval and explained the reasons.

¶2. Poloff on June 30 met with Chamber foreign relations committee chair Dr Cristian Paredes and urged speedy ratification, drawing on talking points reftel. Paredes said he "guaranteed" that the Article 98 agreement, signed by the Dominican Republic on September 13, 2002, would be ratified by the lower house before the change of presidential administration August 16.

¶3. Paredes had not yet seen the Article 98 paperwork, so we provided copies of the agreement in English and Spanish, President Mejia's transmission letter to the Congress recommending ratification, and a document certifying the Senate's recent approval. Paredes said he would track down the document that had been forwarded from the Senate to the Chamber.

¶4. Poloff offered to appear at committee hearings (as he had done prior to the Senate's approval) and to request participation by the MFA's legal adviser to make the case for approval. Paredes foresaw no objections to the agreement and promised to do whatever he could to expedite the ratification.

¶5. Poloff also spoke briefly with Speaker Pacheco and reminded him that the bill was now in the Chamber. Pacheco expressed willingness to move ahead.

KUBISKE